

There is a threat coming to every community's last-ditch emergency communications service called broadband over power lines, BPL for short. BPL is another Internet, telephone, cable TV deliver system. The threat BPL raises to this emergency communications service is similar to a fax machine connected to your phone that is receiving all the time. You could still make calls, but it would be like the worst cell phone call you can imagine.

Right now this emergency service works when 911 will not. It works when police and fire department radios are overloaded beyond use. There is no fee for this service. In fact, according to federal law compensation may not be taken for the service. State and county civil emergency coordinators as well as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recognize its value. FEMA's website has many postings on the importance of this service. Here's just one.

4. (0.684) USFA: Critical Infrastructure Protection Center:
Infogram July 24, 2003:

"The importance of licensed amateur radio operators (who don't mind being called "hams") is re-emerging as part of the critical infrastructures of the emergency response community."

That's right, ham radio. You know the guy or gal whose car, backyard and sometimes their body sprouts all manner of wires, pipes and cables called antennas.

Hams have always served the public interest with their service in times civil emergencies of all types (forest fires, earthquakes, violent/extreme weather conditions, 9/11 cleanup, etc.). Hams do this at their own expense, with their own equipment and sometimes at risk to their own lives. They are well organized and practice regularly so when the call goes out their response is far from amateur. The professionals in hospitals, police and fire departments, state civil emergency management and FEMA all call upon amateur radio for assistance because the everyday systems become quickly overwhelmed during emergencies.

The threat BPL presents to amateur radio is a threat to the whole country.